

"Sig" Sautelle Circus Training House
(George Satterly House)
South Main Street, Route 11
Homer
Cortland County
New York

HABS No. NY-5599

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

"SIG" SAUTELLE CIRCUS TRAINING HOUSE
(GEORGE SATTERLY HOUSE)

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Location: South Main Street, Route 11, Homer, Cortland
County, New York

Present Owner: Mrs. Richard Scanlon and Moreen Carman

Present Occupant: Mrs. Richard Scanlon and Moreen Carman

Present Use: Restaurant

Brief Statement
of Significance: An octagonal structure built as a training
building for one of the circuses later acquired
by the P. T. Barnum Circus.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

1901 - Deed of October 5, 1901, recorded in the Cortland
County Book of Deeds 92, page 454. Ida B.
Satterlee, wife of George Satterly (also known
as Satterlee, "Sig" Sautelle), from P. C.
Ringrose.

1914 - Deed of October 21, 1914, recorded in the Cortland
County Book of Deeds 126, page 64. Howard Larison
from Ida Satterlee.

1917 - Deed of October 23, 1917, recorded in the Cortland
County Book of Deeds 133, page 24. Arthur J.
Goddard from Howard Larison.

1919 - Deed of July 8, 1919, recorded in the Cortland
County Book of Deeds 135, page 353. David Harum
Canning Company, Inc. from Arthur J. Goddard.

1946 - Deed of October 28, 1946, recorded in the Cortland
County Book of Deeds 202, page 426. Harold S.
Spencer from David Harum Canning Company, Inc.

1955 - Deed of September 30, 1955, recorded in the Cortland
County Surrogate Book of Wills No. 21, page 217.
Harold I. Spencer from Harold S. Spencer.

1957 - Deed of January 15, 1957, recorded in the Cortland
County Book of Deeds 248, page 199. Wallace W.
Robinson from Harold I. Spencer.

1960 - Deed of August 12, 1960, recorded in the Cortland County Book of Deeds 272, page 61. Edward D. Tracy and Mary E. Tracy, his wife, from Wallace Robinson.

2. Date of erection: 1902.
3. Architect: Unknown.
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: House built by local labor using local lumber and stone. Suppliers of glass, hardware, unknown.
5. Original plan and construction: The building was built for circus training. The first two floors were used as living quarters for the Satterly (or Satterlee) family while the third floor was used as a training area for acrobats. A rope was lowered by a man standing in the cupola which was then attached to the learning acrobat. This contraption was called a mechanic strap and prevented the acrobatic student from falling to the hard floor below.

Before barns were completed behind the house, animals were kept in the cellar, where there was a training ring. A block and tackle was rigged to the covering over the outside cellar entrance which allowed larger animals to be lowered; there are no outside stairs into the cellar.

6. Alterations and additions: While the house was owned by David Harum Canning Company, Inc. it was used as quarters for seasonal farm laborers.

Harold Spencer used the building as an appliance store. He added the trapdoor in the attic floor.

The building is now a restaurant.

Seven dormers built between 1902 and 1912.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure: George Satterly was born in Luzerne, New York in 1850. His father was a shoemaker. In 1862, George enlisted in the Union Army and served as a drummerboy until discharged in 1865. Upon his return to Luzerne, he took a job as a printer's devil and then as a wagon maker. When he was 21, he decided to join the North American Circus, then wintering in Connecticut. George soon became so successful as a side

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show performer, magician, ventriloquist and puppeteer that he decided to give himself the Italian name, Signor Sautelle. His friends called him Sig. In 1875, Sig bought a horse and wagon and started his own circus. From then until 1904, Sig Sautelle prospered as a circus man, owning ever bigger and more elaborate circuses. He finally sold his circus to James McGadon of the Barnum Circus when his wife's failing health forced him to give up such an active life. Later he started a new circus, but this too he had to sell in 1914 to pay his wife's medical expenses. He died in June, 1928, and was buried in Union Cemetery, Fort Edward, New York.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Interviews: Mr. Frederick Baudry of Cortland, New York; Curtis Harris of Homer, New York.

2. Bibliography:

Syracuse Post Standard, August 5, 1962.

Syracuse Herald American, August 29, 1964.

Marathon Seven Valley Villager, May 27, 1961, an article by Curtis Harris.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Wallace Robinson, former owner.

Prepared by Gerard Muhl
Cortland State College
March, 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A circus training building constructed as an octagonal structure to provide an appropriate ring for rehearsals.

2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall-dimensions: 54' 6" diameter, three stories, octagonal.

2. Foundations: Rubble stone, some cobblestone.

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3. Wall construction: Clapboard, painted grey.
 4. Structural system: Balloon frame.
 5. Porches: Porch across rear, east side; extended roof over cellar entrance on northeast side.
 6. Chimney: One.
 7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Original door in west side no longer visible.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Sash windows, two-over-two, on all sides, except front first floor large display windows; no shutters; seven dormers.
 8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Original wood shingles covered with modern compound-material shingles.
 - b. Dormers: Seven dormers; octagonal cupola with single sash window, two-over-two in each side.
- C. Description of the Interior:
1. Floor plans: See sketch.
 2. Stairways: One staircase between each floor, located in the center of the house; single run, enclosed.
 3. Flooring: Local lumber, rough planking.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Ornamented tin sheeting painted bright colors, no plaster on walls. Ceiling also covered throughout the entire building with ornamented tin sheeting.
 5. Lighting: Electric.
 6. Heating: Central heating, originally heated by stoves.
- D. Site and Surroundings: The house faces west and abuts the sidewalk. Paved parking areas are to north and south. The West Branch of the Tioghnioiga River flows immediately behind (east) the house. Other improvements constructed by Satterly to the east on the other side of the West Brance of Tioghnioiga River include three barns, training ring, bunkhouse, and tent area. (See sketch map.)

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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation of structures in the Southern Tier of New York State, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Cortland County Historical Society and the Valley Development Foundation, Inc.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The historical and architectural material was prepared in March, 1964, by Gerard Muhl of Cortland State College. Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher in April, 1966. The project was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Constance Werner Ramirez, July, 1974.